

Awards

Purpose:

The Executive Office for Immigration Review acknowledges the importance of recognizing those employees who perform in an exemplary manner and, in so doing, make significant contributions to the efficiency and effectiveness of Government operations. Employee recognition and award decisions should provide incentives, demonstrate a direct relationship between organizational goal attainment or results and performance recognition, and be made in a timely manner so as to maximize the meaningfulness of recognition. Awards must be distributed fairly without regard to race, national origin, sex, or other non-merit factors.

All EOIR employees are eligible for awards under this program, except that adjudicative employees may not receive awards for contributions involving the exercise of their judicial responsibilities. Administrative Law Judges are excluded by regulation.

This Awards Policy also establishes the Awards Advisory Committee (“Committee”), which will review and approve/disapprove proposed awards meeting the criteria described herein, with the intent of increasing the transparency of the awards process, recognizing employee contributions in a timely manner, and encouraging employee recognition throughout the year. The Committee is also committed to developing ways to better recognize EOIR employees through Agency awards.

Committee Members:

- EOIR Deputy Director (or designee) (Chair)
- Chief Immigration Judge
- Chairman, Board of Immigration Appeals
- Chief Administrative Hearing Officer
- General Counsel
- Chief Information Officer
- Assistant Director, Office of Administration
- Assistant Director, Office of Policy

Program:

The EOIR awards program consists of performance awards, special act awards, on-the-spot awards, and time off awards.

The Committee will meet quarterly, or at the discretion of the Committee Chair, to review the following categories of awards proposed for employees:

REQUIRED FOR COMMITTEE REVIEW

Award	Award Amount
On-The-Spot Award	Not required
Time-Off Award	Greater than 24 hours

Special Act Award	\$1,000 or more
Performance Awards	As directed by EOIR's Director

Component heads retain discretion to make awards in amounts less than the thresholds described above.

Awards Criteria:

1) On-the-spot Awards

On-the-spot awards are intended to promptly recognize one-time or short-term outstanding efforts by employees of a nature which might otherwise go unrecognized. They are designed to provide quick feedback and special recognition to employees who make extra efforts to perform duties or special assignments in an exemplary manner. If possible, on-the-spot awards should be granted within two weeks after the date of the special act or service.

Criteria

The types of contributions an employee could make in order to be eligible for an on-the-spot award are as follows:

- Making a high-quality contribution to a difficult or important project or assignment.
- Producing exceptionally high quality work under a tight deadline.
- Performing added or emergency assignments in addition to regular duties.
- Demonstrating exceptional courtesy or responsiveness in dealing with the public, client agencies, or colleagues.
- Exercising extraordinary initiative or creativity in addressing a critical need or difficult problem.

On-the-spot awards are based upon the nature and value of the special act or service and can be for net amounts of \$50 up to \$750 (in increments of \$50 only).

2) Time-off Awards

Time-off awards are intended to recognize superior accomplishments or other personal efforts that contribute to the quality, efficiency, or economy of Government operations. They are used principally to recognize contributions that are of a one-time, non-recurring nature, and may also be used to recognize sustained high level performance. However, if recognizing sustained high level performance, supervisors must ensure that time-off awards are not being used as a substitute for performance awards or to circumvent statutory limits of 5 U.S.C. § 5384 on performance awards for SES employees.

Criteria

The types of contributions an employee must make in order to be eligible for a time-off award are as follows:

- Making a high quality contribution involving a difficult or important project or assignment
- Displaying special initiative and skill in completing an assignment or project before a deadline
- Using initiative and creativity in making improvements in a product, activity, program, or service
- Ensuring the mission of an organization is accomplished during a difficult period by successfully completing additional work or a project assignment while still maintaining one's own workload
- Producing additional benefits to the Government as the result of especially effective and timely evaluation of an employee suggestion, and

- Sustained high level performance

A full-time employee may be granted a maximum of 40 hours of time off from duty as an incentive award for any single contribution that meets the criteria.

3) Special Act Awards

Special act and service awards are lump sum cash awards that recognize specific accomplishments which are in the public interest and which have exceeded normal job requirements.

Criteria:

Special act or service contributions are of a one-time, non-recurring nature, connected with, or related to, official employment, such as:

- Performance which has involved overcoming unusual difficulties
- Creative efforts that make important contributions
- Performance of assigned duties with special effort or innovation that results in increased productivity, economy, or other highly desirable benefits or,
- Exemplary or courageous handling of an emergency situation related to official employment.

Special Act awards can be made for amounts of \$250 up to \$7,500.

4) Performance Awards

A performance award can consist of either a cash award or a quality step increase (QSI), when appropriate, but not both. Performance-based lump sum cash awards range from \$250 to \$7,500, and are intended to recognize sustained levels of performance that clearly exceed normal requirements.

A QSI is an increase in an employee's rate of basic pay from one step or rate of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade. The QSI provides faster than normal progression through the step rates of the General Schedule. Unlike other forms of monetary recognition, a QSI permanently increases an employee's rate of basic pay by one step. By law, no more than one QSI may be granted to an employee in the same 52-week period. In order to be eligible for a QSI, the employee's most recent rating of record must be at the outstanding level. The employee must have been performing at that grade for a minimum of six months and there is an expectation that the performance will continue at that level for a minimum of an additional six months. A QSI is not appropriate when an employee has already been rewarded by means of a promotion or monetary performance award based in whole or in part upon essentially the same period of high level performance. The QSI normally does not change the employee's waiting period for the next regular within-grade increase, except when the QSI moves the employee into the fourth or seventh step of his/her grade. This is because of the longer waiting period between steps 4 and 5 (two years) and steps 7 and 8 (three years), respectively.

Performance awards are typically given at the end of the performance year, based on the employee's current performance rating. Performance awards will only be reviewed by the Committee at the direction of EOIR's Director.

Award Nomination Forms:

The current [Award Nomination Form](#) must be used for all nomination submissions to the EOIR awards program.

The current [Fillable SSPA and QSI Form](#)

Effective Date: December 19, 2018

Quick Links

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